



Fire & Fuels Information - 2002

Crews at Sequoia & Kings Canyon Get Ready for Fire Season

As large fires burn across the west each year, Americans face the devastating effects of wildland fires in forests choked with heavy fuel loads. Can something be done about this problem? The answer is yes, and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks (SEKI) are at the forefront of the national solution.

Featured in the recent 2-hour NOVA special *Fire Wars*, the fire and fuels management program at SEKI is designed to reverse unnatural fuels conditions on parklands. The parks have restored over 91,000 acres since the late 1960s through the use of prescribed fire, mechanical fuel reduction (thinning), and by managing lightning fires called *fire use projects*. While there is much more to accomplish across the parks, conditions in landscapes like Grant Grove, Giant Forest, and Mineral King have improved dramatically.

But that's the big picture. Do fire managers think beyond restoring large landscapes? Imagine the "small landscapes" around park offices, homes, neighborhoods, and communities. SEKI attends to these *wildland urban interface* areas too, where human development exists in naturally fire-prone environments. Field work and educational efforts are two ways to increase fire safety in the interface. What have the parks done so far this year?

Crews started the season in the Ash Mountain headquarters area by creating fuel breaks using prescribed fire and mechanical techniques. The park Forestry crew also took down hazard trees and cut up ground fuels near the Bearpaw Meadow High Sierra



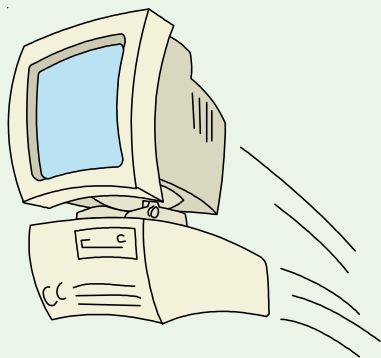
On May 15, 2002, fire crews created fuel breaks in a park housing area near headquarters at Ash Mountain. Does your house have defensible space?

Camp. At the end of May, the parks partnered with the Tulare County FireSafe Council to complete a special project in the private community of Wilsonia (surrounded by Kings Canyon National Park). Fire crews demonstrated various fuel removal methods including piling, chipping, and scattering excess fuels. Residents then toured the area learning about different techniques they could use.

As many Wilsonia residents observed, rural dwellers can take steps to create defensible space around their home and out-buildings. California law requires 30-foot clearance around all structures, and more if buildings are on steep slopes. Contact the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection or your County FireSafe Council for free detailed information on what you can do.

On June 5, 2002, Superintendent Richard H. Martin approved the 2002 Fuels Treatment Plan for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. "Our fire and fuels management program is ready for a productive summer," Martin says. Adhering to the goals of the National Fire Plan passed by Congress in 2001, the parks will utilize both prescribed fire and mechanical techniques to reduce fuels and improve resource conditions. The scheduling of projects depends on fuel moistures, weather, air quality, and especially the availability of firefighting resources.

The 2002 Fuels Treatment Plan includes 9 prescribed burns and 3 mechanical fuel reduction projects totaling approximately 4,900 acres (see page 3 for details).



Sign-up for Email Updates!

Since fire and fuels activities are often fast-changing, the internet is a wonderful tool for us to keep you up-to-date.

We already send periodic email messages to a number of people informing them of prescribed fire ignition dates, wildland fire situations, special presentations, or documents available for public comment.

If you would like to receive email updates, please send your email address to:

jody_lyle@nps.gov

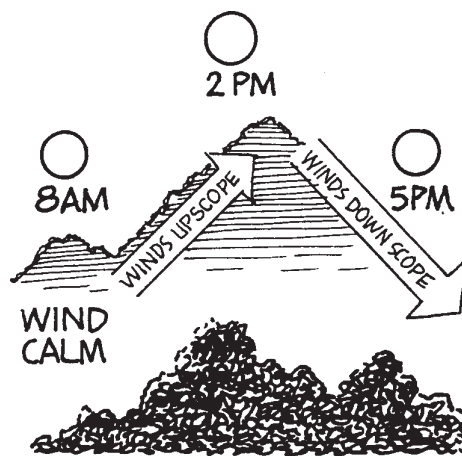
In the message, tell us your name, your email address, and the community list you would like to be on:

**Three Rivers
Mineral King Area
Wilsonia
All Other Communities**

Reducing Smoke Exposure: What the Parks and the Public Can Do

While prescribed fires have proven to be very successful in creating healthy forest conditions, there is a challenging side effect: smoke. Fire managers are sensitive to the need for smoke management during fire operations since the parks host nearly 1.5 million visitors each year and share boundaries with numerous local communities.

While most prescribed fires do not cause serious smoke impacts for visitors or residents, it is inevitable that some smoke will be present. Exposure to this smoke can be reduced through actions by both park management and the public.



What Park Management Can Do

Smoke management in the parks consists of at least four different strategies. First, fire managers choose ignition days with unstable atmospheric conditions, which help disperse smoke. Second, the parks control smoke output by limiting the number of acres ignited per day. Third, using an experienced smoke technician, the parks monitor particulate levels using stationary and mobile equipment. And finally, the parks notify local residents and visitors prior to an ignition.

What the Public Can Do

With advanced notice, people can follow simple guidelines to reduce their exposure on smoky days:

Stay indoors as much as possible, especially seniors and children. Plan your outdoor activities for times and places with low smoke levels. Up-slope breezes occur during the day which will often take smoke into higher elevations. In the evening, these winds change direction and bring smoke down slope to lower elevations.

Close windows, doors, and outside vents when it is smoky to prevent accumulations indoors. Run your air conditioner, if you have one. Ventilate your home and work place during periods of little or no smoke.

Drink lots of water, eat a balanced diet, and get adequate rest. A healthy immune system is the best protection against the effects of smoke.

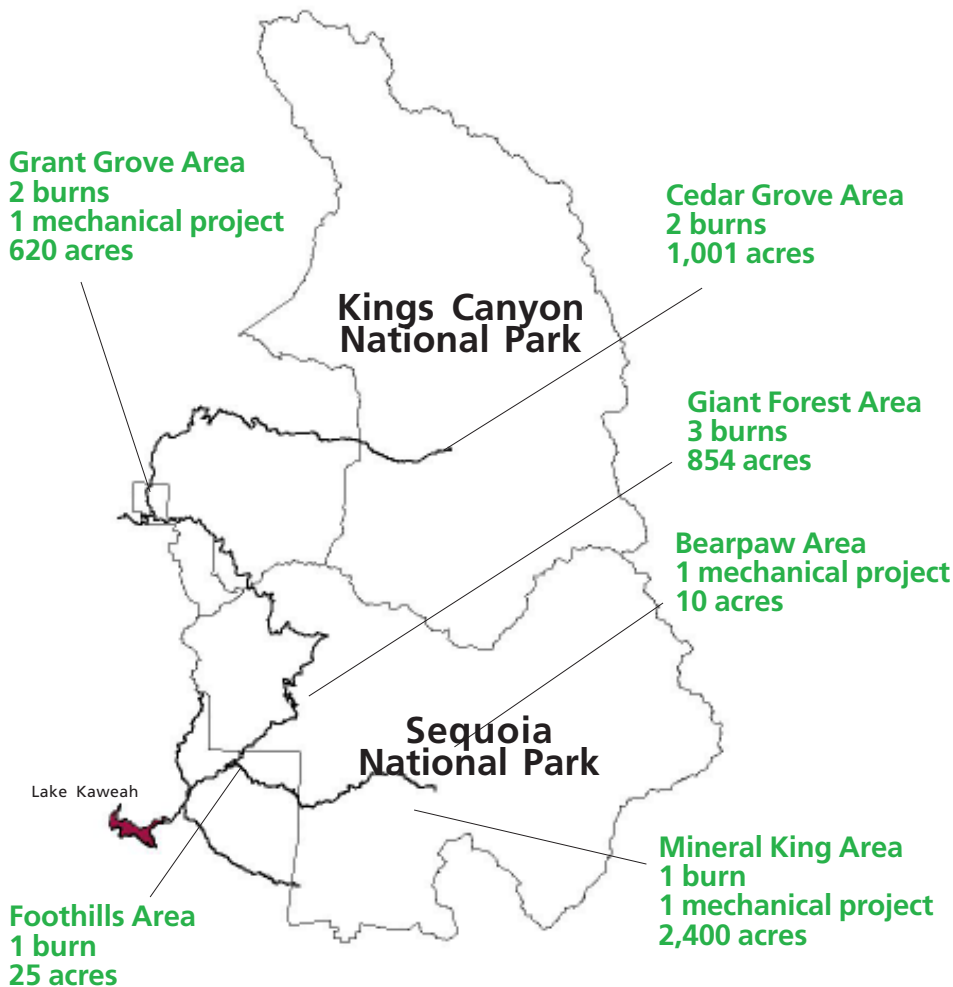
Don't bother wearing paper masks which are designed to trap large dust particles. These masks generally will not protect your lungs from wildland fire smoke.

Be diligent about taking your medicines as prescribed by your doctor if you have heart or lung disease, asthma or emphysema. People with pre-existing respiratory problems are at greater risk.

Consult your physician if, after following these guidelines, you still experience discomfort while breathing.

It is important to remember that smoke from wildland fires fits into a larger context. The parks exist in a regional area where air quality is regularly diminished by particulate pollution. According to the Air District, over 95% of the particulate pollution in our area originates from Central Valley sources (i.e. motor vehicles, industrial fuel burning, manufacturing, and agriculture). Less than 5% comes from wildland fire in the Sierra Nevada. Following the guidelines above, even when there is not smoke present, can help you protect yourself from particulate pollution.

Project Locations for 2002



Area / Project Name	Acres	Possible Date
Foothills / Ash Mountain	25	May/June ✓
Mineral King / Atwell/Deadwood	2,390	late-July
Mineral King / Silver City *	10	summer
Giant Forest / Highway	131	early summer
Giant Forest / Tharp's	100-500	summer
Giant Forest / Sherman Creek	223	late-June
Bearpaw / Bearpaw *	10	mid-June ✓
Grant Grove / Sunset D	175	early-Sept.
Grant Grove / Grant East G	195	late-Sept.
Grant Grove / Hazard Tree *	250	summer
Cedar Grove / Cheat Grass	1	late-June ✓
Cedar Grove / Lewis Creek	1,000	October

* Mechanical Fuel Reduction Project ✓ Project work finished for this year

About This Newsletter

Just like the fire triangle depicted above, there are three critical partners necessary for the flow of fire information: park employees, the media, and local communities.

This newsletter, *Fire & Fuels Information*, is designed to provide quality fire information for the residents of local communities near Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

The idea for this newsletter began in 1998 when Three Rivers residents answered a town survey and told the parks they wanted more fire information. The parks responded by sending a direct letter to all Three Rivers residents in 1999 and 2000. This annual newsletter began in 2001.

This year, the parks are expanding the mailing list for this newsletter to other neighboring communities including Wilsonia, Silver City, Oriole Lake, and Mineral King cabins. We hope everyone finds the information useful.

Jody Lyle
*Fire Information and
Education Specialist*



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks
47050 Generals Highway
Three Rivers, CA 93271-9651

Standard Mail G-83
U.S. Postage and Fees Paid
U.S. Department of the Interior

Postal Customer
Three Rivers, CA 93271

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Editor
Jody Lyle

Park Superintendent
Richard H. Martin

Fire Management Officer
William Kaage

Contributors
Karen Folger, Jeff Manley,
Annie Esperanza, Ben Jacobs

Comments or Questions?
Jody Lyle
Fire Information and Education Specialist
Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks
47050 Generals Highway
Three Rivers, CA 93271-9651
559 565-3703

The National Park Service cares for the
special places saved by the American people
so that all may experience our heritage.

For More Information

There are many ways to keep informed about fire and fuels activities in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks:

Listen to a recorded fire information message about upcoming burns or other fire activity by calling 565-3341. Press 9, then 4, then 3.

Visit the park fire operations website for updated weather, air district burn days, crew assignments, and fire narratives.
<http://www.nps.gov/seki/firesit>

Call Jody Lyle, Fire Information and Education Specialist, at
(559) 565-3703.

Sign up for email updates. See box on page 2 for details.